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From the 1st of October 1890

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Colonial Newspaper Press
Described by Colonel Stone.

A Communication from President Roberts
—The Steuben Monument—New
Members Elected—The Address.

The (monthly meeting of the Oneida county historical society was held in the library building last evening. Hon. C. W. Hutchinson, first vice president, presided.

After the reading of the minutes, General Darling, the corresponding secretary, reported a long list of gifts to the society.

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT.

The following was read:

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT TREASURER, U. S. A.
NEW YORK CITY, October 1.

General C. W. Darling, corresponding secretary Oneida historical society, Utica, N. Y.

My Dear General—The Oneida historical society has treated me with favor much beyond my deserts, while it has commanded my best efforts for its prosperity and growth. It has rendered valuable service to our country, to the whole Mohawk valley and to our great commonwealth, and it has a broad work before it in preserving our local immorials, and giving form and substance to the history of the land of the Iroquois. To the extent of my ability I will ask the privilege of laboring in and for the society for the advancement of its high and worthy objects. But I beg that at the coming annual election another may be chosen to fill the office of president.

During the past eighteen months duties elsewhere have deprived me of the pleasure of attendance at the meetings, and continued absence from the city will prolong that deprivation. With a deep sense of the honor of the position, and cordial thanks to the society, I will ask to pass over the office at the close of the year to a successor who will have more ability and leisure to perform its tasks, but can not have more zeal or higher purpose in behalf of the organization. Very truly yours,

ELIAS H. ROBERTS.

The communication was received and placed on file.

THE NEXT MEETING.

Rev. D. W. Rigelow of the committee on addresses reported that at the next meeting, on Monday, Nov. 24, Hon. D. E. Wager of Rome would read a paper on 'The life of Colonel Marinus Willett before taking command of Fort Stanwix.' He will at a subsequent meeting complete the narrative.

The papers are the result of much research, and will present interesting and valuable information.

MEMBERS ELECTED AND PROPOSED.

The following were elected life members, Hon. C. W. Hutchinson, Thomas Jenkins, Pittsburg, Pa.; coresponding members, Colonel A. S. Hubbard, San Francisco, Charles K. Merion, Waterloo, Rev. Caleb D. Bradlee and Rev. George Ellis, Boston, Frank B. Gny, Hartford, Ct., Rev. Charles H. Walker, Chittenango; Hon. John W. Vrooman, Herkimer; resident members, Arthur M. Boardsley, Isaac N. Maynard, David Foster, George Coventry, Edward D. Maheux.

The following were proposed. For corresponding members, Elias Vosseller, librarian historical society of Hunterdon county, N. J., T. Frank Waters, corresponding secretary of the Ipswich historical society, Ipswich, Mass., resident members, Dr. Theodore H. Brafish, Louis Lombard.

THE STEUBEN MONUMENT.

Rev. Daniel Ballou of the special committee on the preservation of the Steuben monument reported as follows:

Our committee appointed to see what damage has been done to the Steuben monument and to recommend what measures should be taken to prevent vandalism; respectfully report:

First, That after repeated efforts, it was found practically impossible to select a day when a committee of five, representing a teacher, a lawyer, a physician, a printer and a clergyman, could visit the historic sepulcher.

It was finally agreed that two of your committee should go on the 5:55 A. M. train, Thursday, October 16.

Your committee was represented at that hour by its chairman, his associate, Dr. Tetty, being detained by a professional call.

Having arranged for a conveyance from Rensselaer to the Steuben monument and certain of the trustees of the Second Baptist society, who have the grounds and monument in charge, having agreed to meet a committee of this society on that morning, the chairman proceeded on his mission, and in company with John C. Griffiths and John W. Fritchard, representing the Second Baptist congregation, a somewhat critical examination of the monument and the grounds surrounding was made.

The Steuben monument is practically in the center of a five acre lot of mountain land, which is enclosed with a fence of barbed wire, save a short distance on the south side, where a board fence is maintained. With the exception of a small space immediately surrounding the monument, and the roadway leading to it, we saw no evidence of the woodman's ax or that cattle have been upon the grounds.

In order to convey as clearly as possible the location on the monument of the vandalism, it appears necessary to briefly describe the structure.

The first five or six feet above the foundation

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The meeting was then adjourned to Liberty hall, where Colonel William L. Stone of New Jersey delivered an address on "The Colonial Newspaper Press of Boston and New York."

COLONEL STONE'S ADDRESS

Following is an abstract of Colonel Stone's address:

To deliver a lecture on the newspaper press with its first paying our respects to the devil and Dr. Paris, would be considered not only a violation of all precedent, but—as regards this distinguished individual—a positive breach of good manners. They have so long been associated together not only in popular tradition, but in books, that the greater part of the reading world seems to think that they were the original partners in the republic of letters. In deed, the opinion is even yet quite prevalent that the evil has been a silent partner, tho' not a sleeping one, in every newspaper establishment since. The proposition to this extent is certainly manifestly bad, and yet from the moral condition of a large portion of the press it must be confessed there is a strong prescriptive evidence that in the unhappy influences exercised by the personage referred to over the affairs of men, he is not altogether neglectful of the press. Be this as it may, an engine of such great importance in the daily affairs of life—its energies are of such tremendous power, either for good or evil, that I believe a few moments can be profitably spent this evening in glancing at its rise and early progress in two of the American colonies during the period preceding the revolution.

The honor of setting up the first printing press in the American colonies belongs to Massachusetts. Only 18 years had elapsed from the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth before a press was in operation in Cambridge; then as populous as Boston. The project of establishing a press in the new world was once veiled, and almost executed by Rev. Isaac Glover, a dissenting clergyman in England, who had interested himself largely in planting the colony, and a portion of whose family was already in America. Mr. Glover raised the means of purchasing his press, types and other necessary apparatus by contributions in England and Holland. With these he embarked for America in 1638, but died a few days before his ship reached the shore. The press was established at Cambridge, and there it remained for 60 years, and 140 years before a press was established in another colony.

Having thus introduced his subject and referred to its beginning, Colonel Stone gave an accurate historical review of the early days of the colonial press, and the publication of the Boston News Letter, the first newspaper of America, in April, 1704.

This paper was printed as a half sheet of paper like a large size of foolscap. It was continued for 15 years, weekly, without a rival on the continent, and continually languishing for want of support. In 1719, the editor made a great effort to enlarge his publication, and stated in his prospectus that he found it to be impossible with a weekly half sheet to carry on all the public occurrences of Europe, with those of the American colonies and the West Indies. He was then 13 months behind the news, and to obviate the difficulty, he resolved to publish every other week a full sheet of foolscap. He afterwards announced, as the advantage of this enlargement, that in eight months he was able to bring down the foreign news to within five months of the date of his publication.

What a contrast between the newspapers of that day and our own. Then news seven days old from New York to Boston was swift enough for an express. Now if we can not obtain the news from Washington in less than the same number of minutes, we growl and storm and talk of starting more telegraph companies.

The growth of the newspaper in Boston was then described at length, down to the time of the revolution with brief mention of the editors of those early days. The publication of the first New York paper, the Gazette, in 1725, and the New York newspapers and their editors were presented with several anecdotes, which brought out the characters of the institution and the times distinctly.

Regarding errors of the press, Colonel Stone said: "Nothing can be more annoying to authors and publishers than errors of the press, and yet those who are unskilled in the art of printing can scarcely conceive the difficulty of avoiding them. To arrive at ordinary accuracy in a daily newspaper, requires the reading and correction of at least two proofs, and even then an editor who has not become case-hardened by long practice and endurance will often be shocked at the transformation of sense into nonsense or the murdering of one of his happiest conceits, or the plucking of the point out of one of his neatest paragraphs by a typographical error. A number of amusing incidents of such errors were told in a happy manner.

From the establishment, however, of the independence of the country until the present day, there has been no attempt to fetter the press by censors, or by law; while the old English law of libel, which prevailed until the beginning of the present century, has been so modified as to allow the truth in all cases to be given in evidence. For the attainment of this great end, the country is indebted, more than to all other men, to the early and bosom friend of the late Dr. Nott—to the talent and eloquence of one whose memory, tho' more than 80 years dead, is as fresh and green as the turf upon his tomb. Need I name the man, who like many others commenced his brilliant career in a country store—the man who was first in the breach at Yorktown—whose eloquence secured the adoption of that glorious constitution which his wisdom assisted to frame—whose genius called our national system of finance into existence—and upon whose eloquent lips courts and juries and senates hung—need I say I will not pursue the picture. The shade of Hamilton has already risen before you. Applause. The public press of no other country equals that of the United States, either on the score of its moral or its intellectual power, or for the exertion of that manly independence of thought and action which ought ever to characterize the press of a free people.

The paper of Mr. Stone exhibited his usual thoroughness and research, and contained many passages of valuable history and fair estimate of men and events. As the son of an eminent New York editor, Mr. Stone inherits interest in his theme, and as himself a historian he possesses the capacity to treat it well. The society is fortunate in having secured such an address from such an eminent source.

Dr. William H. Watson moved that a vote of thanks be tendered to the speaker. He also spoke of his friendship with Colonel Stone and his family. His reference to the address was gracefully appreciative.

General Darling seconded the motion in a few remarks, and it was unanimously carried.



The Oneida Historical Society,

Utica, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:

The aim of a Historical Society is to honor the memorials and associations of the past, because out of it has been wrought the results of the present. The life of those who went before us perhaps was difficult and urgent, and fewer facilities were offered to put on record the story of their work.

We have a country which has before it such a certain and important future that we have it in trust to preserve the memory of all the elements which will go to the shaping of that future. This would not be of as much moment if our present was not so heavily charged with the future of a land whose destinies are so powerfully to shape those of the world. A few years from now will give a significance far beyond any present estimate to impulses that having started in the past, are gathering strength in the present, and will be important elements in the forming of our future. Materials of little value now will be sought for then, which, unless scrupulously guarded, will be looked for in vain. So thoroughly has this fact been understood and appreciated that many permanent buildings have been erected and endowments made for Historical Societies. In a number of cases the State governments have materially aided the objects of these Societies by an annual appropriation, and by a careful investigation made by the late Rt. Rev. C. F. Robertson, Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, and member of the Historical Societies of Missouri and Virginia; the following facts were ascertained:

In Massachusetts the State Historical Society has its own spacious quarters, and it has issued many volumes of collections. The Maine Historical Society has published its valuable collections, and so has the New Hampshire Historical Society. The Vermont Society has put forth numerous transactions, and that of Rhode Island has given to its members, and the country, much highly prized historical material. The New Haven Historical Society has given to the people of Connecticut many rare volumes of colonial records in which the New Haven Colony occupies a very prominent place. The New York Historical Society put forth the first of its numerous works in 1811, and in 1814, through its vice-president, Gov. Clinton, it sent to the Legislature a memorial praying that the perishing records of the State of New York might be preserved and published. In compliance with the petition a competent person was sent abroad to search and copy the papers relating to the colony, which effort resulted in the publication of thirteen volumes of colonial records and four volumes of documentary history. The society has a publication fund, a share in which entitles its owner to a copy of all publications. The Long Island Historical Society in Brooklyn has a property for which \$140,000 was paid, and its library numbers nearly 100,000 volumes. The Historical Society of New Jersey has published many volumes of its proceedings, and the Pennsylvania Society, which owns its own property, has a publication fund of \$23,000, and has printed a large number of volumes of collections. The Delaware Historical Society has a building of its own, and the Historical Society of Maryland has the Public Publication Fund to meet the cost of the numerous publications it issues. The Virginia Historical Society has its quarters in the elegant Westmoreland Building at Richmond, and the Georgia Historical Society has had presented to it a fine structure admirably adapted to its needs. The Ohio Historical Society at Columbus issues an excellent quarterly, and is recognized as a state institution. The Wisconsin State Historical Society has a library of over 100,000 titles, and it occupies commodious rooms in the State House. The Iowa State Historical Society is located in the State University, and has a yearly appropriation from the State of \$500. The Kansas State Historical Society receives \$4,000 a year from the State, and the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Omaha Historical Society of New York, occupies rooms in a government building through the courtesy of city officials.

The undersigned has now in hand the preparation of a paper in which facts relative to other Historical Societies will be published as soon as they can be ascertained.

The Oneida Historical Society now stands in the front rank of Historical Societies, and its mission is to cover in its collections and researches the entire territory embraced in the original civil division of Central New York—the county of Tryon, erected in 1772, rechristened Montgomery, in contempt of a royal governor, in 1784; divided in 1791 into the Counties of Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie and Herkimer, Oneida being erected out of the latter in 1798. The original Tryon County is peculiarly interesting in a historical point of view, for here lived Joseph Brant, who made the Mohawk Valley memorable as the scene of the fiercest and most relentless Indian and Tory massacres. Here also were the frontier forts and castles of the French, the Indians and the English, as well as of the colonists—Fort Bull, Fort Plain, Fort Hill, Fort Hunter, Fort Drayton, Fort Schuyler, Fort Oswego and Fort Brewerton. Here were fought the battles of Oriskany and Saratoga, and here the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company made the first attempt at artificial water navigation in America. Here was the scene of the romantic adventure of the Castleton Company, and here is the grave and monument of the brave Baron Steuben. Here was tested one of the first railroads ever built, and here was organized the first Express Company. Here the telegraph was put to its first practical utility, and here were erected the first cotton factory and the first woollen factory chartered by the State of New York, and here has been the home of more than a due proportion of the statesmen whose life-work is a part of the history of the nation.

The Oneida Historical Society is the proper custodian of the documents, the manuscripts, the relics, the memorials of every kind which relate to this remarkable history, and it remains for this society to faithfully gather and preserve the valuable materials of local history that still remain scattered and are fast disappearing.

The Oneida Historical Society has in no way done more to preserve and keep alive local history than by the monuments which it has helped to erect. The beginnings of the city of Utica are defined by the memorial of old Fort Schuyler, and the column at Oriskany teaches for all time the strategic and commercial relations of the valley of the Mohawk to the continent, while it gives immortality to the men who withstood the armed host of invasion. The monument to Baron Steuben, due in part to the cooperation of our German friends at all its stages had the favor of the first president of this society, the late Gov. Horatio Seymour.

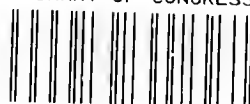
The story of the maintenance of the Oneida Historical Society is largely the story of the individual efforts of a few persons, and yet it is well supported by the very best element of society in Utica.

What it most needs now is a fire-proof building of its own, separate and distinct from other structures, for the preservation of the material which has already come into its hands, and which is yet to be received.

Respectfully yours,

C. W. Darling, Cor. Sec.

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